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## NSW and Vic look to boost flu vax

HEALTH officials in NSW and Victoria are looking at measures to boost uptake of influenza vaccines following the Queensland Government's decision to fund free vaccination services earlier this week (PD 24 May).

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, told *Pharmacy Daily*, that the organisation was in discussions with the State Government about how they could work together to improve vaccination rates, as flu case numbers rise.

"Whether it is a model similar to that announced in Queensland earlier this week, or a re-purposing of enhancement grants that were offered by the Victorian Government in late 2021 and early 2022 for the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, there are options that can be considered," Tassone said.

"The Victorian Department of Health and Government are monitoring the situation closely and

are consulting with stakeholders around potential measures that can be considered to encourage the public to come forward for a flu vaccination.

"The Guild believes there is not only an opportunity for the Victorian and Federal Governments in the 2022 flu season to engage with community pharmacy but beyond in future seasons.

"Particularly funding pharmacies to administer the flu vaccine to patients eligible for the National Immunisation Program (NIP) so that they do not have to charge an administration fee to patients, because unlike general practice, community pharmacies do not have Medicare billing rights."

The Guild's NSW Branch has also been in discussions with State Health officials about the possibility of pharmacies playing a role supporting efforts to increase the uptake of flu vaccinations, amidst reports that NSW Health may follow Queensland's lead in



providing free shots to patients who are not eligible for them through the NIP.

In a statement released yesterday, NSW Health Minister, Brad Hazzard, reported that hospitals in the State were "already seeing a surge in influenza cases".

"After two years of COVID, our hospitals do not need the added challenge of avoidable influenza, when flu shots are readily available at GPs and pharmacies," he said.

"With almost no exposure to flu these past two years, it is imperative we all get a flu jab to protect ourselves and the community."

### Today's issue of PD

*Pharmacy Daily* today features three pages of news plus a full page from **Wizard Pharmacy Services**.

### Building loyalty

**WIZARD** Pharmacy is providing franchisees with a complete business platform that enables them to build stronger connections with their customers.

The group aims to build consumer loyalty with its Wizard Rewards program. See page four for more.

### New Sigma CFO

**SIGMA** Healthcare has named Nigel Simonsz as its new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) from 29 Aug.

Simonsz will bring almost 30 years financial and commercial experience to the role.

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Bianco L et al., *J Am Geriatr Soc* 2012; 60:1180-1.

## Dispensary Corner

**BRITISH** pharmacist, Shamil Amin, is set to spend two years at Her Majesty's pleasure, for diverting painkillers to an aspiring "big time" drug dealer. Amin supplied codeine-based medicines to Daniel Tillyard, who used the products to make a highly potent opioid drink called lean, with which he intended to flood the streets of London. However, the duo's dreams of making it big as the primary suppliers of the drug in the British capital came to a sudden halt when police found text messages between the pair discussing deals, during a separate investigation into illicit drug dealers. Amin, who worked as a pharmacy manager in two stores, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply narcotics, landing a two years in prison.

## COVID conflict factors here to stay

**UNDERSTANDING** the factors fuelling conflict in community pharmacy settings during the COVID-19 pandemic will be key to keeping staff safe going forward. Researchers from Griffith University reported that anxiety caused by uncertainty about how to manage the pandemic was a factor making individuals more confrontational, while changes brought about by the crisis had also negatively impacted the mental health of pharmacy workers.

In the study, published in *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, one pharmacy owner noted that, "under stress people don't respond well, so they take it out on the people on the frontline, which would be me and my staff".

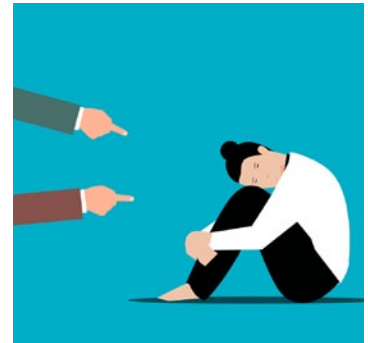
Another pharmacist told researchers that "you find that mentally, you're drained out in many ways because it takes energy

out of you to be able to deal with the disappointment or frustration or anger from customers... it makes you feel as though you haven't done enough".

While interactions with patients were identified as sources of conflict, frequent changes to regulations around electronic prescriptions and telehealth, combined with having to manage medicines shortages and obligations imposed by franchise groups, also added to pharmacy workers' stress levels.

"Whether due to the continued presence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the near future or the occurrence of another high volatility situation which changes the status quo and function of society, the level of conflict in community pharmacy settings will likely escalate or remain elevated compared to the past," the authors said.

"To ensure conflict does not negatively affect the function and



practice of community pharmacy, such as affecting the mental health of staff, the nature of conflict needs to be better understood.

"Understanding the nature of conflict is critical to pharmacy personnel to ensure experienced conflicts do not harm staff or the function of the pharmacy, but instead act as a stepping-stone for improving the function and practice of community pharmacy, especially during times of increased disruption and conflict."



## NEW RANGE, NEW CODES A QUICK GUIDE



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		2570058	074330	380425		
		(per sachet)	(per sachet)	(per sachet)		
61000042	Picoprep Orange 2 x 20g	2560124	946915	380250	10000743	70854
61000043	Picoprep Orange 3 x 20g	2560132	946907	380255	10000726	70853
61000044	Picoprep Orange 50 x 20g	2560079	946591	380260	10000774	70856
61000045	Prepkit Orange	2560141	946893	380265	10000958	70855
61000046	Glycoprep-O Kit	2560087	946885	380270	10000943	70851
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**PBS Information:** GLYCOPREP ORANGE, GLYCOPREP-O KIT, PICOPREP ORANGE & PREPKIT ORANGE are not PBS listed.

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## Unlocking 7CPA

WITH 100 days to go until the return of Pharmacy Connect, conference convenor, Kos Sclavos, says the Sydney-based event will look to help pharmacy owners grasp the opportunities created by the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement (7CPA).

**CLICK HERE** for more.

## Swan floats pharmacist prescribing

**ENABLING** pharmacists to prescribe antiviral medications could be key to stemming Australia's rising COVID-19 death toll, medic-turned-journalist, Dr Normal Swan, believes.

Speaking on the ABC's *Coronacast* podcast last week, Swan said there was a need to understand why more than 40 Australians are dying every day as a result of the virus.

"We need an intervention," he said.

"It's just unacceptable that we have this high level of daily deaths, which in theory could be preventable if we distributed antivirals efficiently.

"Can you put pharmacists in the field and allow pharmacists to prescribe these [antivirals]?"

However, Swan noted "the problem with that is that it's

complex prescribing", with Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir) know to interact with some critical medications and being inappropriate for patients with reduced kidney function, while there are concerns about the safety of Lagevrio (molnupiravir) "in women of child-bearing age".

Speaking during a Pharmacy Guild of Australia, webinar earlier this year (*PD 08 Mar*) Therapeutic Goods Administration Head, John Skerritt, did not rule out the possibility that the two medications could be down-scheduled to Pharmacist-Only at some point.

"I had thought at one stage that these might end up on Schedule 3, because you could argue that with appropriate recording and all that, it could have sped-up access to relevant patients," he said.



"But you've got one drug with a lot of drug-drug interactions, another drug that impacts on liver and kidney function, and you've got drugs with significant pregnancy and male contraception warnings. "Those things all push them up into S4 for scheduling criteria."

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